IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of searching a collaborative document database, comprising the steps of:

providing said database with a plurality of parent documents and a plurality of child documents, each of said child documents being related to at least one of the parent documents in said database;

for each of the parent documents, combining said parent document and the child documents related to said parent document, into a master index document and storing the master index documents in an index document database separate from the collaborative document database, including

        i)   taking selected field items from the parent document;

        ii)   placing said selected field items as fields on the index document;

        iii)   placing text from said parent document in said fields of the index document; and

        iv)   placing text from said related child documents in said fields of the index document;

providing a search term; and

searching all said index documents for said search term.

2. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein:

the combining step includes the step of identifying in the index document for each parent document, at least some of the child documents related to the parent document.

3. (Original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein the searching step includes the step of, for each parent document, searching for the search term in the child documents identified in the index document for the parent document.

4. (Original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein the identifying step includes the step of identifying in the index document for each parent document, all of the child documents related to the parent document.

5. (Original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein the identifying step includes the step of identifying in the index document for each parent document, only the child documents that both are related to the parent document and meet predefined criteria.

6. (Currently Amended) A system for searching a collaborative document database, comprising:

means for providing said database with a plurality of parent documents and a plurality of child documents, each of said child documents being related to at least one of the parent documents;

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means for combining for each parent document, said parent document and the child documents related to said parent document, into a master index document, including

  i) means for taking selected field items from the parent document

  ii) means for placing said selected field items as fields on the index document;

  iii) means for placing text from said parent document in said fields of the index document; and

  iv) means for placing text from said related child documents in said fields of the index document;

an index document database separate from the collaborative document database for storing the master index documents;

means for providing a search term; and

means for searching all said index documents for said search term.

7. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 6, wherein:

the combining means includes the means for identifying in the index document for each parent document, at least some of the child documents related to the parent document.

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8. (Original) A system according to Claim 7, wherein the searching means includes means for searching, for each parent document, for the search term in the child documents identified in the index document for the parent document.

9. (Original) A system according to Claim 7, wherein the identifying means includes the means for identifying in the index document for each parent document, all of the child documents related to the parent document.

10. (Original) A system according to Claim 7, wherein the identifying means includes means for identifying in the index document for each parent document, only the child documents that both are related to the parent document and meet predefined criteria.

11. (Currently Amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for searching a collaborative document database, said method steps comprising:

providing said database with a plurality of parent documents and a plurality of child documents, ach of said child documents being related to at least one of the parent documents;

for each of the parent documents, combining said parent document and the child documents related to said parent document, into a master index document and storing the master index documents in an index document database separate from the collaborative document database, including

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i)   taking selected field items from the parent document;

ii)   placing said selected field items as fields on the index document;

iii)   placing text from said parent document in said fields of the index document; and

iv)   placing text from said related child documents in said fields of the index document;

providing a search term; and

searching all said index documents for said search term.

12.   (Previously Presented) A program storage device according to Claim 11, wherein:

the combining step includes the step of identifying in the index document for each parent document, at least some of the child documents related to the parent document.

13.   (Original) A program storage device according to Claim 12, wherein the searching step includes the step of, for each parent document, searching for the search term in the child documents identified in the index document for the parent document.

Claims 14 and 15 (Cancelled).

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16.   (New) A method according to Claim 1, wherein:

the combining step includes the step, for each parent document, updating the index document for the parent document whenever one of the child documents related to the parent document changes;

the search term includes a plurality of words;

for at least one of the parent documents, none of the child documents related to said one of the parent documents includes all of said plurality of words; and

all of said plurality of words are found in the index document for said one of the parent documents.

17.   (New) A method according to Claim 1, wherein:

the combining step includes the steps of

    i)   finding a selected parent document in the document database,

    ii)   finding a selected index document in the index database for the selected parent document, and

    iii)   clearing data in the found index document;

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the step of taking selected field items from the parent document includes the step of taking selected singleton field items from the found parent document;

the step of placing said selected field items as fields on the index document include the step of placing said selected singleton field items as fields on the found index document;

the step of placing text from said parent document in said fields of the index document includes the step of proceeding through the found parent document and taking all text thereon and placing said all text in said fields in the found index document;

the step of placing text from the related child documents in said fields of the index document includes the steps of

    i)   proceeding thorough a hierarchy of child documents,

    ii)   obtaining all text from each of said hierarchy of child documents, and

    iii)   concatenating said all text from each of said hierarchy of child documents to data in a search text block field on the found index document.

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